

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. In a telecommunications system using half-duplex communications and a push-to-talk feature, a method for queuing participants in a push-to-talk call, the method comprising the steps of:

defining a group for the push-to-talk call in response to a user input and wherein the group has at least one participant;

determining the availability of the at least one participant;

assigning a priority level designation to the at least one participant;

allocating resources for the push-to-talk call after the steps of determining the availability of the at least one participant and assigning a priority designation to the at least one participant; and

granting access to transmit speech in the push-to-talk call based on the priority level.

2. The method of claim 1, further comprising the steps of:

receiving a request to speak while a current participant is speaking;

comparing a priority level of a participant initiating the request to speak with that of the current participant currently speaking; and

preempting the current participant based on the priority level of the participant initiating the request and the priority level of the current participant currently speaking, if the participant initiating the request has a higher priority level.

3. The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of interactively communicating with a device capable of displaying messages wherein this step includes the step of transmitting messages indicating a current speaker to the device capable of sending and receiving messages.
4. The method of claim 3, wherein the step of interactively communicating with a device capable of displaying messages further includes the step of transmitting messages indicating a change in speakers to the device capable of sending and receiving messages.
5. The method of claim 1, wherein the step of defining a group for a call in response to a user input further includes the step of defining the group to call using the device capable of sending and receiving messages to select at least one participant.
6. The method of claim 1, wherein the step of defining a group for the push-to-talk call in response to a user input further includes the step of defining the group for the push-to-talk call using an Internet interface to select at least one participant.
7. The method of claim 1, wherein the step of determining the availability of at least one participant further comprises the step of sending a request for access to a device capable of sending and receiving messages.
8. The method of claim 7, wherein the step of determining availability of at least one participant further comprises the step of receiving a response from the device capable of

sending and receiving messages, responsive to the step of sending a request for access to the device capable of sending and receiving messages.

9. The method of claim 1, wherein the step of assigning a priority designation to the at least one participant, further comprises the step of assigning a priority designation to the at least one participant using one of an Internet interface and a device capable of sending and receiving messages.

10. The method of claim 1, wherein the step of allocating resources for the push-to-talk call further comprises the step of reserving a means for duplicating voice packets to be used in the call.

11. The method of claim 2, wherein the step of receiving the request to speak while a current participant is speaking further comprises the step of depressing a button on a device capable of sending and receiving messages.

12. The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of requesting one of: a display of the queue order, and a display of all of the participants on the call.

13. In a telecommunications system using half-duplex communications and a push-to-talk feature, an apparatus for queuing participants in a push-to-talk call, comprising:  
a first server; and

a second server communicatively coupled to the first server and wherein the second server is programmed to:

define a group for the push-to-talk call in response to a user input and wherein the group has at least one participant;

determine the availability of the at least one participant;

assign a priority level designation to the at least one participant;

allocate resources for the push-to-talk call after determining the availability of the at least one participant and assigning a priority designation to the at least one participant;  
and

interactively communicate with a device capable of sending and receiving messages over the telecommunications system; and

grant access to transmit speech in the push-to-talk call based on the priority level.

14. The apparatus of claim 13, wherein the second server is further programmed to:

receive a request to speak while a current participant is speaking;

compare the priority level of the participant initiating the request to speak with that of the current participant currently speaking; and

preempt the current participant currently speaking based on the priority level of the participant initiating the call and the priority level of the current participant currently speaking, if the priority of the participant currently speaking is higher than the priority of the current participant currently speaking.

15. The apparatus of claim 13, wherein the second server is programmed to transmit messages indicating priority designation to the device capable of sending and receiving messages over the telecommunications system.

16. The apparatus of claim 13, wherein the second server is programmed to transmit messages indicating the current speaker to the device capable of sending and receiving messages over the telecommunications system.

17. The apparatus of claim 13, wherein the second server is programmed to transmit messages indicating a change in speakers to the device capable of sending and receiving messages over the telecommunications system.

18. The apparatus of claim 13, wherein the second server is programmed to assign a priority designation to the at least one participant using one of: an Internet interface and the device capable of sending and receiving messages.

19. The apparatus of claim 13, wherein the second server is programmed to receive a request to display of the queue order.

20. The apparatus of claim 19, wherein the queue order is displayed on the device capable of sending and receiving messages over the telecommunications system..